

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Switzerland

SUBJECT Developments within the Gesellschaft Schweiz-Sowjetunion (Swiss-Soviet Friendship Society)

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1. At the insistence of Jakob Lechleiter, secretary of the Partei der Arbeit for the Canton of Zürich, Dr. Zacharias Goldberg and Otto Schneebeli will be removed from the managing committee (Vorstand) of the Gesellschaft Schweiz-Sowjetunion (Swiss-Soviet Friendship Society). Lechleiter has described Goldberg and Schneebeli as untrustworthy. It is also planned to replace Dr. Konrad Farner, president of the Zürich section of the society, with Alfred Hünbelin, a secondary school teacher in Zürich. Hünbelin was an unsuccessful Pda candidate in the cantonal elections held in Zürich in April 1951.
2. The Society is planning to declare one of the coming months of 1951 as "Friendship Month" and will request permission of the Bundesrat (Federal Council) in Bern for the appearance within Switzerland of a group of Soviet musicians and athletes. It is hoped that the Russian troupe will visit Bern, Geneva, Lausanne, and Zurich. Alfred Merki, national secretary of the Society, has estimated that the expenses of the tour would amount to 20,000 Swiss francs, and he has been authorized to approach Nikolai Nikolaevitch Skobelev, VOKS* representative at the Soviet Legation in Bern, with a request that the Legation undertake to put up this sum. The financial situation within the Society continues to be unsatisfactory and a recent drive to raise money brought only 200 Swiss francs.
3. Skobelev's reaction to Merki's proposal is not yet known. It is reported, however, that Skobelev recently criticized Paul Camenisch's decision to spend his summer vacation in Italy on the grounds that Camenisch should always be available in the event Skobelev might need him. Camenisch finally persuaded Skobelev that Merki could handle any urgent matter which Camenisch was away. Camenisch was chosen national president of the Society in March 1951.

* Comment: These initials stand for Russian words, the translation of which is as follows: All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

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